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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

Ellis B. Usher

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MEMORIES OF LINCOLN AND OF WAR TIME

BY ELLIS B. USHER

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Read before The Military Order of The Loyal Legion of Wisconsin,  
on Wednesday Evening, February 7, 1912.

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Mr. Commander, and Gentlemen of the Loyal Legion of Wisconsin:-

To be invited to a meeting of this Order is always a privilege.  
To be asked to read a paper on this occasion is such an honor, that  
the nearer this evening has approached, the more have I felt that honor  
might have been much more worthily bestowed.

What I shall attempt is to recall and rehearse some of the incidents and experiences of my own childhood, which may, by their very commonplace, tell a story of the civil war and of the remarkable man to whose memory these exercises do honor, such as could only come from a child and a non-combatant, who saw great things only from afar, and heard of Lincoln and knew him, only at second hand. It is, of necessity, a man's effort, in large measure hopeless, to call back his youth, to reincarnate some of the great spirits of 1860 and 1865, and we walk again among the giants, the tales of great civil and military campaigns, the mighty battles, and the gentler womanly ministrations of that aw-



fully tragic, intensely pathetic, yet everlastingly glorious four years struggle for national perpetuity. A struggle over which the ungainly form, the rough hewn but wonderfully human face, and the sad, tender, almost Christ-like genius of Abraham Lincoln towered like a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Never, since the children of Israel were led out of bondage, was a nation more perfectly under Divine guidance and directed with more sure and perfect wisdom.

The days immediately preceding the presidential election of 1860, and those intervening between that event and the first Boom of hostile cannon, at Fort Sumpter, in the April following, were all tense with overpowering consciousness of approaching calamity, a sense of danger, full of a foreboding such as men may feel as they go into battle, that fills the larger souls with calm, while those of shallower beds break noisily over their pebbles and overflow their narrow banks.

Those least noisy, were then, as always, most dangerous. They were saying less, but doing more to gird their loins and temper their minds for the desperate struggle they felt impending, and which they were alike powerless to stay and hopeless to forecast.



I have not seen men in battle. There, chivalry is present, But God save me from the inhuman madness of the mob. There was a mob spirit abroad in those earlier, ominous days that preceded war, a rancour that inflamed the mind and poisoned the tongue when neighbor spoke of neighbor, and life-long friends parted who had been wont to jest of politics, but to whom jest would now be craven or it would be sacrilege.

What follows is of interest, if it is not badly set as to perspective and values, because it attempts to record by concrete illustration and contemporaneous quotation, some of the activities of one family, which was represented at the front only by a patriotic, brave woman, and a youth who had to wait until the war was almost over to reach the age of enlistment. This family was in no respect exceptional, except that it did less and sacrificed less than many of its neighbors. It failed to reach even the climax of Artemus Ward's patriotism and sacrifice the wife's relations.

The land was filled with patriotic fervor and you will each make

\* Henry Elbridge Bacon, then of Portland, Maine.



your own application of the recital as your own experience is rich in memories.

Every patriotic person, man, woman and child, did something to preserve the Union.

"The maid who binds her warrior's sash,  
With smile that well her pain dissembles,  
The while beneath her drooping lash  
One starry teardrop hangs and trembles,  
Though Heaven alone record that tear  
And fame shall never know the story,  
Her heart has shed a drop as dear  
As E'er bedewed the field of glory."

In 1860 William H. Seward was the idol of the Republican party. He was the leader of its advance guard, its philosopher, guide, and conspicuous statesman in the United States senate. Younger men may realize something of his hold upon the hearts of the young party, if they recall the enthusiasm of the youth and flower of that party, twenty four years later, for its "Plumed Knight."

Wisconsin was Republican to the core. It had sent Durkee, a Free Soil man, to the Senate, as early as 1855. It had given Fremont 13,247 plurality in 1856, one of the four Fremont states west of the Alleghan-ies, and to give that emphasis, in the year following it chose Alexander



Randall governor by a majority of 7,460 votes. He, too, represented the aggressive anti-slavery element of the new party in Wisconsin.

The state sent a strong Seward delegation to Chicago, and a large number of enthusiastic Wisconsin followers joined the confident throng of Seward men who filled the hotel lobbies, in anticipation of an easy triumph for their favorite.

Seward's champion was the veteran Whig Manager, Thurlow Weed. He argued that "the party x x x need take no doubtful candidate. 'In Mr. Seward' said he, 'we have a representative of the best the party has developed, the acknowledged leader of a great party. If we are to have a victory worth having, let's have it under the leadership of the man who made the party what it is, then we shall secure a victory of principles as well as of men; to accept anything short of this is to admit we are afraid of real issues and real leadership.'"

The opposition to Seward was timid of too pronounced an anti-slavery record, and strangely as it may sound to those who regard Mr. Lincoln as the embodiment of Republican principles, his nomination was forced by those who feared the abolition spirit of New York and New



England. A young delegate from the then "bleeding" territory of Kansas, has well described the doubt and uncertainty which clouded the situation until it clarified under the strong impulse of men from the Border States. He thus describes the process:

"Just here came to the front a movement from the Union Republicans of the Border States; an element so far overlooked, that immediately came to be recognized as formidable. The movement was ably led by the Blairs of Maryland, father and son; by Judge Bates and Frank P. Blair, of Missouri; and Cassius M. Clay, of Kentucky. It brought the first shadow of grim-visaged war. Mr. Clay of Kentucky, was the spokesman; an orator of magnificent personality, gifted in speech, and commanding careful attention by his earnest and dramatic manner. He insisted that we were on the verge of civil war; that the South was already preparing for the conflict, and that the seating of our President was to be the beginning of strife. Along the borders of the Ohio, in Maryland and in Missouri, were hosts of Union men who must stand as a wall between the homes of the North and the hordes of secession. These were the men who must push back the line of defence and carry the war into the enemy's country. The man who will command this vote can command these services, and the ser-

\* Swinging a National Convention, Addison G. Porter, Harper's Weekly Dec. 3-, 1903.



vice of every one of these Union men will be required. The man to command that vote and that service is Lincoln. He was born among us and we believe in him; he is anti-slavery enough for you; he is Union enough for us; give us Lincoln, and we will make good returns for your confidence."

To this convention, with many other Wisconsin supporters of Seward, went Captain Wilson Colwell, Leonard Lottridge, Isaac L. Usher, and others from La Crosse and the old Sixth Congressional District. Mr. Lottridge, then editor of the La Crosse Republican, the last survivor of this delegation, died last year. To him is due the credit for preserving the account here recited. This is his story:

"On the day the nomination was made it was hot in more senses than one. The tide was setting away from Seward. Chicago was just simply one concerted howl for Lincoln, and Chicago was Illinois.

We had been in our seats from morning until well along in the afternoon, sweltering and well-nigh exhausted. Seward's prospects began to look forlorn, and I proposed we go out on the street. The crowd there was immense and wildly excited; any mention of Seward's name would be drowned by hurrahs for 'Old Abe'. The states were voting, and as fast as they were announced a man on the roof of the Wigwam would shout it down to the crowd.



It was a scene never to be forgotten—the instant hush when the man on the roof held up his hand, the tumultuous uproar when Lincoln's votes were announced. Then the states began changing; one after another cast so many votes for Lincoln. Pretty soon the man on the roof came forward with a look about him that was indication enough of something momentous. He was a tall man, but he seemed, suddenly, to tower up ten feet. We never heard just what he said. It was something about New York, and the crowd knew its significance. The air was full of hats. Men threw their arms about each other, weeping, yelling, jumping up and down, half crazy.

"It looked very foolish to the La Crosse crowd, all except 'Cap' Colwell, who was an original Lincoln man, and shouted with the rest.

"We went to our room in the Tremont House and sat down to talk it over and Colwell went along to cheer us up. Usher was the first man to rise to the situation. 'There's no use growling, boys,' he said, 'This thing is settled and probably for the best. Let's give a cheer for 'Old Abe', just to see how it sounds!'

"Well, we gave our first shout for Lincoln, then and there, and felt a heap better.

"That evening the house was overrun by excited men, some trying to get supper, some paying their bills preparatory to leaving for home, and a good many were discussing the situation. The street outside was packed



full, and already, Lincoln transparencies could be seen, while old Hanks, with his Lincoln rails, just struck the popular note.

"Usher was pretty well known about the house, and somebody from Missouri began calling for him, for a speech. We were just lifting him up on a pile of trunks, when Rice, the landlord, ran out of the office and begged us not to start any speech-making there, for he couldn't do business at all if there was any more excitement. 'Go out on the balcony!' said he, 'Give them a talk there!'

"So out we went, Horace Greeley, and other distinguished men among us. Usher had a new silk hat which he handed to the nearest man, and that happened to be Mr. Greeley.

"As soon as the crowd saw Usher bareheaded, they began yelling - 'Name? Name?' I stepped forward, and the idea came to me that instant, for I'd never thought of it before, and introduced -- 'Wisconsin's favorite son -- Isaac L. Usher.'

"When the shout that followed this subsided, Usher leaned over the balcony and in a voice that could be heard the whole length of the block, in either direction, said:-

"Gentlemen! I originally hail from the Pine Tree state of Maine. Today I hail from the Badger State of

\*  
Rice and Bicknell kept the Augusta House, in La Crosse in the late fifties.



Wisconsin. I came to this convention pining for the nomination of William H. Seward, of New York, but I'm going home to fight like a badger for 'Old Abe' Lincoln of Illinois."

"Well, that was enough. The sea of upturned faces became, in a moment, a tempest of upturned hats, umbrellas and canes, out of which came a yell of applause such as Chicago had not heard before. After several minutes Usher was able to conclude his speech, and was followed by others, better known, but his was the success of the occasion. He never saw his hat again and the impression was that Horace in his approving excitement, had thrown it high in air."

This was probably the first Lincoln speech made in the country, after the adjournment of the convention.

The next day, on the way home, there were "doings" at every station.

The route for people from the western part of the state, then was by way of the old Chicago, St. Paul and Fond du Lac line to Minnesota Junction, where they changed to the La Crosse and Milwaukee road.

At one of the first stations outside of Chicago, the crowd of enthusiastic Republicans made a raid upon a fence and appropriated some of the rails to assist in making an imposing parade at all subsequent



stepping places. These rails were finally landed in La Crosse, where, after a parade from the train, they were exhibited as the veritable work of Lincoln, "the Rail splitter."

This account of these exciting events agrees substantially with that which came to me, at first hands, from the line of the rail the signal is thus.

As a small boy I sat with my parents upon the little balcony of the old Turner Hall in La Crosse, during the great Lincoln campaign rally of that eventful fall. The speaker of the occasion was Horatio's Democratic rival, Senator William H. Sewar, and the demonstration took nothing from that fact.

Every possible effort was here made to turn out the "Fire-eaters" from the entire county, (that was the name given to the Lincoln campaign clubs of 1860), and the effort was most successful. Farmers drove long distances, some of them twenty and thirty miles, and even from the remotest sections they brought a few men uniformed with all kinds of cap and gear, and the crowd was large on whole, that I never before familiar.

There was unbounded enthusiasm. Each new delegation, large or small, a remembrance of these proceedings.



small , got a continuous round of vociferous applause as it entered the crowded street, which followed it to the speaker's stand. But the climax of enthusiasm and excitement , for me, was reached when Onalaska, then our home, came in, 100 men strong, and every one in full campaign uniform. It had been my father's special effort to rally the country, in force, for this great meeting, and the men of Onalaska had enlisted his particular pride, as the vote of Onalaska, later on, was his greatest solicitude. An old letter of Nov. 23d, written to a member of the family in Maine, gives the sequel. He wrote:

"Old Abe has been elected, gloriously elected, President of these United States. Let the South Howl! Abraham will take them all to his bosom after the Fourth of March, and soothe their troubled spirits. As went Onalaska, so went the state of Wisconsin, Onalaska did nobly. So the the state."

Events were moving rapidly. History was making. Every Lincoln household in the land was filled with deep solicitude for the future, as the time for Lincoln's inauguration approached.

That the South should have been arrogant, after an unquestioned control of over eighty years, was not as surprising as that a relitio-



al revolution nurtured on the prairies and in the wilderness of the New West, should have had the temerity and the force to achieve success.

That Lincoln was elected was a political miracle. A miracle not yet fully realized or appreciated by his countrymen. It was, following his nomination, the further evidence of that unseen guidance that grew, and still grows, upon the minds of the American people, and upon the world, --- the feeling, the assurance, that Abraham Lincoln was a chosen instrument in the hands of an Almighty God.

Most of us have thought there was a great, tempestuous uprising of the entire North in the election of 1860. All know that the result was a minority choice and that the South lost by scattering her forces.

\* But, few have realized that a change of one vote in twenty, in the states of the Northwest, would have given them to Douglas, that the election would have gone to the House of Representatives, the South would have controlled the choice, Lincoln would have been defeated, and the whole course of subsequent history changed.

\*"The Fight for the Northwest, 1860", W. E. Dodd, The American Historical Review, July 1911.



Any attempt to measure the powerful influence exerted in the Mississippi Valley by the South, should recognize that Douglas had defeated Lincoln for the senate in 1858, and that Lincoln carried Illinois, in 1860, by but a slender majority of 4629. Territorially, more than half the state was against him.

\*The intense and intolerant feeling against every hint of the abolition of slavery, and the force of conservative public opinion, were everywhere apparent. In no direction was this more strikingly manifest than in the churches. Of twenty three ministers who were Lincoln's neighbors in Springfield, only three voted for him in 1860. Nor was this an isolated instance. While the people as a whole did not favor slavery, conservative sentiment was so strong in Illinois, that as late as 1852, the second year of the Civil war, the state "voted by 100,000 majority, to forbid the immigration of negroes", and for thirty years prior to the war no colored man had been "allowed to enter the bounds of the state except on condition of giving a bond of \$1,000 as a guarantee of good behavior."

\*The attitude of Lincoln's first inaugural as to state's rights reflects on this conservatism.



There was therefore, quite as much of shrewd politics as of anti-slavery sentiment, in the developments which made Lincoln's nomination and election possible. The Republican platform, catering to new settlers, promised homesteads to them in the New West, and a protective tariff plank was made attractive to the iron mongers of Pennsylvania.

The appeal of Cassius M. Clay for the Border States, that had shaped the nomination, was followed at the election by another surprise, a new factor never before reckoned with ----\* the votes of the German, Scandinavian, and New England immigrants who had just been filling up the new states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota.

These were the unseen, yet potent, agencies which wrought confusion to the calculations of Republican as well as Democratic prophets, that mark, again, the higher wisdom that shaped our destinies as a people.

The approach of the Fourth of March 1861, was one of increasing anxiety to all friends of the new administration. With a long breath of genuine relief they read, at last, that, despite the perils of his

\* See Mr. Doon's article previously referred to



pathway, the President, thanks to the alert precautions of Allan Pinkerton, had passed through Baltimore, and was safely in Washington.

A letter, brief, but intense with the emotion of the occasion was written by my father to his mother on March 5th;

"I write to apprise you that I have witnessed the inauguration of The Man for the Times. All true men have faith in Abraham. All rebels trembled, when, in a clear and firm tone, that rang out over the assembled thousands, he said:

'In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect, and defend it.'

"T'was grand! T'was glorious!"

The stirring scenes of that day were indelibly fixed in mind by the account brought home by this eye witness. Almost hourly there were encounters, at the hotels and upon the streets of the National Capitol, between sympathizers of secession and the supporters of the



admiration and the Union. The insolence of the Texas Senator, Higfall, and of other rebels who publicly flaunted their disunion sentiments, was a daily, almost hourly, assault upon the dignity of the government. One personal reminiscence recalls how the tall President, at one of his crowded receptions, reached his long arm over the heads of several, and with a warm, truly western ----- "How are you Usher?" forced my father to shake hands, when, in pure sympathy, he was trying to slip by, unnoticed. A friendly call upon some \*cousins, in Baltimore, had ended with a very uncomfortable dinner, because of their hot southern sympathies. These were some points of most immediate contact with the great President and his anxious and perilous surroundings.

War was coming. All felt sure of it in Washington.

From eastern members of the family came stirring accounts of the patriotic fervor of New England.

Then there were a few weeks of what seemed like hesitancy among those in authority. It was but the hush which, powerful and eloquent,

\* The Woods.



precedes the reverberating crash of the storm.

If it were there I believe I could put my feet upon the very spot, on the porch before our door, where I stood, a little lad, in the early evening of April 13, 1861, to meet my father upon his return from town, anxious, as was everyone, to hear the very latest news from Washington, toward which all eyes and ears were strained.

With serious and suppressed excitement, characterized by more than natural composure, he told my mother that Fort Sumpter was fired upon the day before. Our flag had been struck to armed foes. Rebellion was openly in arms.

The solemn reality of civil war was a sobering contemplation, and middle aged men, who grasped its full and awful significance, pondered deeply upon its possible sequel. Yet, few men, North or South, seemed, like Mr. Lincoln, to realize, from the beginning, the dread import of such a fratricidal conflict. The more serious minded failed to comprehend how what was, what must be, the utter madness of self destruction, could long possess men who were brothers in interest as in blood. But they were helpless. Hope was dead. There was temper no longer for anything but battle. Armed force must be the arbiter.



Monday morning Lincoln's call for 75,000 men flashed over the wires. Ignatius Anders, a manly, handsome young fellow of 18, left our farm to join the La Crosse Light Guard, which left for Camp Randall, under Captain Colwell, during the first week of May, to become Co.B. of the Second Infantry, one of the regiments of the famous Iron Brigade. Other men whom I knew, and many more whose names were familiar, were in that company, and as I followed closely and anxiously, the news of battles, and pored over the heroic deeds of our men, in the local newspapers and in the Chicago Tribune, and studied the war pictures and portraits in Harper's Weekly, my heart would always thrill and beat faster if I found mention of the gallant Second, or of its officers or men. Later, the First Battery, and the Fourteenth and the Twenty Fifth Infantry regiments, shared my boyish interest and enthusiasm, for La Crosse county was well represented in each of them. The Twenty Fifth had been mustered in La Crosse, and I had seen for the first time a thousand men under the command of officers who were all near neighbors. Colonel Montgomery had lived in La Crosse. Major "Jerry" Rusk had driven the La Crosse and Viroqua Stage, and so the roll might be called



On May 3, father wrote to an aunt in Maine:

"You say you hear nothing from the West. The President called for one regiment from Wisconsin. It has gone, and five more are ready to move at a moment's notice."

To this my mother added:

"We had already heard from Maine through the papers and we are rather surprised that you doubt the war spirit of the Great Northwest. Not only the men but the women are ready to fight, here. I hope the war will last 'til the slave question is settled forever; 'til we hear no more of compromise or concessions. I'd rather all my friends should go to battle than see the Republic subverted by Southern traitors. I believe there is still a God in Israel."

These are but examples of the early outbursts of patriotic fervor that filled all Northern hearts.

But, all too soon, the grim sense of a sustained and prolonged struggle forced itself upon the people. Homes were now frequently wrapped in sorrow and draped in mourning. The handsome youths of gallant leave takings a few months earlier, smart fellows who had marched gaily and proudly away to the inspiring beat of martial music,



were, every now and then, coming home with an empty trousers leg, an empty sleeve, or their youth swept on to swift old age by disease, or the tortures of a Southern prison pen.

When news came, in September 1863, that "Naco" Anders, my friend and hero, whose promotion from the ranks I had confidently expected, had fallen at Antietam, it was a personal affliction. The horrors of war were no longer in Arsenal and far away. I felt it as the loss of a brother.

What were the solemn verities of war, came, however, with greatest realism, in the letters of \*an aunt, a sweet, courageous soul, who served almost three years in hospital and field. She passed her 90th birthday last August, and still awaits the call, and the fulfillment of the promise made to the good and faithful servant. No celestial joys can transcend her rich deserts.

After experience as a hospital nurse at Chester, Pennsylvania, ‡she had gone to the front, where women were very few, in January 1865,

\*Miss Rebecca Randall Usher, of Bar Mills, Maine. She is mentioned by both Moore and Brackett in their books upon the women of the Civil War. She died at the home of her sister, Mrs. Nathan Webb, in Portland, Maine, June 3, 1912.

‡ Women were not then employed by the government as field hospital nurses.



\*as assistant in charge of the Maine State Agency, at City Point. Here she remained, with Grant, until after Lee surrendered.

On her way down the Potomac, on January 19, on board the United States transport Vanderbilt, she wrote home. An experience in Washington, en route, she relates as follows:

"We went to Mrs. Lincoln's levee and when I shook hands with the President, he said; 'How do you do, dear?' in his most kindly manner, while he shook hands with the others with the most indifferent air possible."

This warmth of word and manner, was, doubtless, to be explained by the fact that she had stood a little apart for some minutes, watching the President intently, and the manifest deep interest and admiration which she felt, had caught his eye before she appeared in the moving line of guests to shake his hand.

This was one of the most sacred experiences of her life and was always referred to with warmth and enthusiasm. It was as if she had received a blessing from on high, a special dispensation of approval and regard.

\*She was offered the chief post when the Agency was organized but could not then leave home. See her letters, Series in my possession.



Two scraps from her letters will serve to show that she was doing military duty

"Here I am, at last, fairly on my way to City Point, the only woman on a boat crowded with men. xxx If you were here with me we would go outside and look at the scenery, but it is such a labor to get through the men and the floor is so covered with tobacco juice, that I shall hardly undertake it again until dinner time when I hope the crowd will be sufficiently diminished to leave one free passage."

Again, on February 30, she wrote home from City Point:-

"\*Have just received the glorious news that Sherman is in Charleston. I felt like throwing up my hat and giving three times three and a tiger. But as Mrs. Mayhew and I concluded that would hardly be dignified for State Agents, we contented ourselves with announcing it to all the soldiers as they came into the reading room, and congratulating them. We are expecting to go to Richmond soon."

At the second inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, on March 4th, 1865, this aunt met my father in Washington, going up for a furlough and a visit. There were other ladies there, with their husbands, and

\*This was a false report. Sherman did not go to Charleston.



it made a merry party. Everybody felt, then, that the war was rapidly drawing to an inevitable close, and though bloody work was still doing, there were rifts in the clouds and hope was dawning. Here is her account of Lincoln's second inauguration:

"It rained very hard and was so dark we had the gas lighted in the parlor. At half past 10 we started for the capitol in our old clothes, prepared for a rainy day. On the capitol steps I noticed a line of light around the western horizon, and I pointed it out to my brother, remarking that, in Maine, we should consider that a sign of fair weather. But he saw no promise in it, saying it would take more than one day for that faint streak of light to cover the heavens.

"The House adjourned at 12 and a doorkeeper, who was an old acquaintance of my brother's took us through a committee room and let us through the window to the balcony where the President was to speak. In a few moments the Judges of the Supreme Court and other dignitaries appeared, followed by Mr. Lincoln.

"Just at the moment when the President stepped out from beneath the shelter of the capitol on to the balcony, the sun, which, deaf to all the importunities of the crowd of sovereigns that thronged the city, had refused to shed a ray of light or effort for several days, now poured down such a flood of light upon the uncovered head of the President that the whole scene was illumined and



transfigured by it. The effect was wonderful. Everybody was surprised and astonished. The transition from gloomy darkness to the clearest and most brilliant sunlight, was so sudden and so beneficent!"

She also mentions, what was widely commented upon at the time, the appearance of a star a little after 3 o'clock P. M. upon this day of the inauguration. The heavens had been so very dark that a rift in the clouds permitted this star to be visible and brilliant. Taken with the sunburst at the beginning of the inaugural, the auguries were felt to be most propitious.

The aunt returned to her work. Her letters tell of daily carnage, and of 2,000 wounded men at one time in the field hospitals, among whom she sought out those from Maine, who were especially her charge, but no suffering soldier, from any state, passed the canvas roofed Maine home, unaided.

Then, just as the welcome hope of peace was ripening into assurance, came the awful tragedy of April 14th, 1865, that stunned the country, and startled the whole world into common human sympathy.

I was on my way to town, when I met a villager, one of those men who, like birds of ill favor, are ever the alert messenger of bad



tigings, hastening to tell my father that Lincoln had been assassinated. He stopped to tell me his errand, and I regarded him forever after, unjustly, perhaps, with an aversion that in some occult way held him responsible for the horror of his announcement.

I was too young to formulate an opinion. My first thought was that the South was chargeable with this new and terrible responsibility, and that only blood could atone for a deed so atrocious.

When I reached the village men, women, and children, were alike overwhelmed. Gloom was everywhere, and wrath and despair struggled in the breasts of the strongest.

Why, of all men, should Abraham Lincoln, gentle of spirit, humane and noble in act as in word, be the object of a deed so foul, so heartlessly? Amid the tremendous excitement, no one could answer. "Father thy will be done!" was whispered as often in deep despair, as it was spoken in faith and consolation. Thus it was at home.

From her place with the army, at the front, on Sunday, the 16th of April, my aunt wrote home:-



"Isn't this news of the death of the President terrible ? I am overwhelmed by it. I have felt depressed for the last two or three weeks, notwithstanding our victories. I have not hurried on, or felt like it. When everybody was wild here, I remained in-doors writing for one of my patients. I was disappointed that I could get up no enthusiasm, and attributed it to the presence of so much suffering. But I think now it was, perhaps, a presentiment of our great loss.

"The soldiers are revengeful. They want every rebel hung. It has been a common remark among our soldiers that Lincoln was a second Washington. He is enshrined in all hearts.

"Only a week ago today he went through all the wards here, shaking hands with every soldier. In one of the tents he shook hands with a rebel. One of our men told him-' That man's a Johnny!' 'Is he ?' and he went back and shook hands with him again, and told him he hoped he would be well taken care of and very soon returned to his family and home."

This is the heartfelt expression of the moment. In a later letter she gives her feelings somewhat fuller and more mature expression and says:

"I was alone in my work with a house full of company, no help, and very sick patients in the wards, but I bore



up well under it until the news came of the assassination of our beloved President.

"I could not believe it, at first, but when the terrible truth was forced upon me, I was almost paralyzed. It seemed as if the sun would never shine again. All in the future seemed shrouded in impenetrable sorrow.

"I had no fear for our country. I knew that Mr. Lincoln's work was accomplished, and that the Rebellion, gigantic as its proportions were, was crushed. That the day of universal freedom had dawned upon the world; - a day for heartfelt gratitude and national rejoicing, such as no people had ever seen.

"But how could a nation rejoice when its best beloved lay dead ?

"It was not that we needed him that we were so stricken with sorrow, but because we loved him ,

"He was a wonderful man, great, wise, and good, and with all the tenderness of a woman.

"How blest have we been under his rule and how blessed will be his memory !"

This, my hearers, is the story as recollection summons it, with the valuable help of faded documents and many precious family letters. It must stand without embellishment.

If I were an orator I might light the fervent torch of eloquence



at this bier, before which a great Nation, yea, the whole World, stood with bowed head and reverent heart. Were I a poet I might lay my wreath of rhapsody with other thousands of immortelles. But I am neither. I will venture no profanation of this sacred assemblage. A great man died a tragic death to emphasize A New Dawn of Freedom to all mankind. It was his translation to immortality. No word of mine can add to the imperishable splendor of that martyrdom.

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The original manuscript of the foregoing address

MEMORIES OF LINCOLN AND OF WAR TIME

was presented to Mr. George P. Hambrecht of  
Madison, Wisconsin, with the compliments of the  
author, April 4, 1933, to be added to Mr. Ham-  
brecht's collection of Lincolniana.



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